SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

Saron's Mission: ***Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!!***

Joe Ulrey, Saron Congregational Council President
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Ken Boyd, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

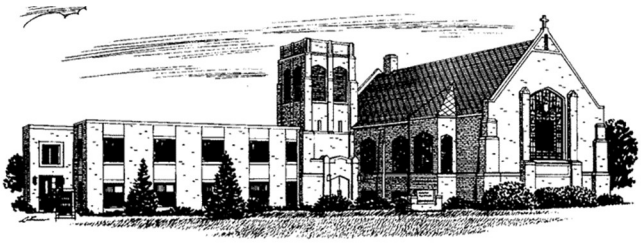
Typical Sunday at Saron:

Fall, Winter and Spring (**began Sept 8**):
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am Learning Hour for Ages 3-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer (begins May 25, 2025):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

This being my last newsletter article as president, I wanted to make it special, so we are calling one more congregational meeting for **Sunday, February 9 to hold an election for the new pastor**. At this very important meeting we will be presented with the council/call committee's unanimous recommendation of an outstanding candidate to serve as our new pastor. We will then vote on 2 proposals: the candidate (needs 2/3 majority) and starting compensation (needs simple majority).

Thank you to all the committee chairs who reported out at the annual meeting on January 26. It is always impressive to see how much has been accomplished over the year. Special thanks to outgoing council member Sally Schmuhl for her 3 years on the council. Although I am also an outgoing council member after 6 years, I will be meeting with the council, including new members Marilyn Frey and Scott Gaspari at our February 22 special council meeting to select new officers/committee liaisons and kick off the new year which looks to be a big one!

Joe Ulrey, Council President

FEBRUARY 9 @ NOON

Plan Ahead:
March 5
12:15pm & 7pm

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 9am-1pm
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)
Ken Boyd (Bookkeeper):
Thursday Mornings and by Appointment

If you or your loved one is need of a visit or pastoral care, please contact Ed Staude. He will get you in touch with the correct person. Ed's contact info is 636/288-1016 or staude.edmund@gmail.com.

Other questions or concerns during the pastoral transition can be addressed to the appropriate council member or liaison:
President - Joe Ulrey
Vice President - Fran Bolson
Secretary - Claudia Staude
Treasurer - Ed Brunner
Worship - Erik Bergh (or Krin Jurgensen, Worship Chair)
Learning - Fran Bolson or Claudia Staude
Outreach - Sally Schmuhl or Jim Manore
Facilities - Steve Cook or Ed Brunner
Youth - Chuck Knebl
Support - Jim Manore (or Don Hafer, Support Chair)
Hospitality - Merrily Smith

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph;
John Olson is at Woodland Terrace in Bridgman.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

2/2 Lindsay Gaspari
2/2 Kate Kohs
2/3 Fran Bolson
2/3 Makayla Bradley
2/5 Helen Peters-Totzke
2/5 Erin Vollmer
2/6 Mary Alice Brunner
2/6 Linda Dipert
2/8 Ernie Knauf
2/9 Frieda Williams
2/10 Aiden Ashley
2/10 Sterling Johnson
2/11 Kyle Carter
2/15 Robert King
2/15 Hazel Kohs
2/21 Ed Staude
2/21 Ryan Talbert
2/22 Darlene Kiessel
2/22 Hailey Talbert
2/24 Doug Wold
2/26 Wendy King
2/27 Ted Hovick
2/28 Cheryl Houser

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

We have no wedding anniversaries listed for February so we wish all our members a Happy Valentine's Day!

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

CONDOLENCES

We offer our thoughts and prayers on behalf of the friends and family of the following members:

Paula D. Risetter

upon her death on December 24, 2024. Paula's service was held at Saron on December 30, 2024.

Patricia R. Breyen

upon her death on December 24, 2024. Pat's service was held at Saron on January 17, 2025

Thomas W. Siewert

upon his death on January 4, 2025. Tom's service will be later in April.

God is our refuge and strength.
- Psalm 46:1a

FORTIFY & fly

The ceiling is done and we've started the walls in what will be the new Sunday School Classroom. We've purchased clear bins and sorted ALL the craft supplies so everything will be organized and easy to find for the Sunday School teachers. The inspirational mural designed by Keith Stevens is being painted (also by Keith) in the new teen lounge. These updates were made possible by Fortify & Fly funds and are the early steps in a renovation plan for the Education Wing that will span over several years (unrelated to Fortify & Fly). You are always encouraged to head down and check out the progress!

We are hoping to have the new signage installed on the outside of the building (alley side) soon after the 2025 budget is approved. Adding this lettering and a cross with the ELCA logo will bring attention to the doors that we now use as the front entrance, especially for those new to the area or for guests at weddings/funerals. We also intend to put smaller lettering on the glass near the doors themselves with information such as the service times to make it look more professional and welcoming.

Worship

NEW: ASSISTED HEARING DEVICES

Our new sound system in the sanctuary came with headphones to assist those having difficulty hearing the worship service. If you are interested, ask Marcus if you can try one out.

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we have Sensory Bags available for use. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your prayer petitions (concerns or thanksgivings) via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made online via a link in our Thursday email. You may include as much, or little, detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are invited to be part of this Monday group at noon.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. You don't even have to pray aloud, if you would prefer to pray quietly. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. **Flowers are now $40 per vase.** Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then please **return the vase.**

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex, including clipboards with coloring pages and children's bulletins. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions with Marilyn Lucy (269/759-3464). We can also use more volunteers!

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

February 2: Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Jeremiah 1:4-10
Psalm 71:1-6
1 Corinthians 13:1-13
Luke 4:21-30

February 9: Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 6:1-8
Psalm 138
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Luke 5:1-11

February 16: Sixth Sunday after Epiphany
Jeremiah 17:5-10
Psalm 1
1 Corinthians 15:12-20
Luke 6:17-26

February 23: Seventh Sunday after Epiphany
Genesis 43:3-11, 15
Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40
1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50
Luke 6:27-38

The youth will be having their annual taco/nacho bar and pool party on Sunday, February 23, right after the 11am worship. This event is open to all our kids, Preschool - High School. Friends are welcome too!
Bradley Home:
4370 S Tanglewood Trl in St Joseph

Youth Group (middle school & high school age) typically meets once per month after the late service for food, fun and fellowship. Friends are always welcome! **Contact Scott at scottgaspari@outlook.com with any questions or to be added to the email list.**

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

We have many educational options to fit your needs and schedule. Always feel welcome to join us, at any time and for as many sessions as works for you.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

We have opportunities for many ages and stages!

The Sunday Learning Hour (9:40am-10:30am) offers the following options:

- Preschool - Grade 5: Sunday School
- Grades 6-8: Confirmation Classes
- High School - Adult: Adult Forum

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

The Thursday morning Bible study continues to work through *Joseph, the Journey to Forgiveness.* The class runs weekly from **9:30am-11am in the upstairs lounge**. Contact Colleen Lundgren at 269/921-4873 or colleenkl@icloud.com with any questions.

From the website: *This study explores what God has to say to us about grace and forgiveness through Joseph's story of trial and triumph found in Genesis 37-50. As we study his dreams, his betrayers, his dysfunctional family, his struggle to forgive, and his journey toward reconciliation, we'll find truths that echo into our own personal situations as well as practical help for answering common life questions.*

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

For February, we decided to do a week-by-week study, focusing on the lessons and Gospel for the following Sunday. This format worked well last summer and led to some great discussions. We hope to augment our studies this time by personalizing the theme message in each week's readings. How can I apply this message to my day-to-day life? How can this message help me be a better Christian? How can I use this message to make others feel welcome at Saron? The possibilities are endless. Hope you will join us!

We meet **Tuesday evenings at 6pm in the upstairs lounge** for one hour, then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. All are welcome!

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email
Don Hafer (269/985-3637, haferdon@gmail.com)
Ed Staude (636/288-1016, staude.edmund@gmail.com)
Eric Standen (269/759-3556, dande-standen@sbcglobal.net)

We are back together on **February 2 at 6:30pm in the upstairs lounge**. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson is up for discussion. The New York Times ranks this book as the "keynote non-fiction book of the American century thus far." It examines the unspoken caste system that has shaped America and how our lives are still defined by a hierarchy of human division. Very timely, for sure. The book was a challenge to read and will be a challenge to discuss.

Then on **March 2** we touch a lighter note with *Iona Iverson's Rules for Commuting* by Clair Pooley. Iona, a larger-than-life magazine advice columnist, travels the same 10 stops on the train each day with the same people. They never speak. Iona's given them all nicknames. Then a single event starts a chain reaction, and it becomes apparent that talking to strangers can teach you about the world and yourself.

Please join us for both events. All are welcome at any meeting. A good discussion is guaranteed! For questions, up-dates on any weather problems or to be added to the email list for future information call Kathy Cowall at (269) 428-0354 or kcowall @ hotmail.com.

If a book is well written, I always fine it too short.
-Jane Austen

FORUM & fellowship

People appear to be feeling anxious, stressed, unsettled, and tense. So many people seem so angry. Is it just that time of year, worries about family, worries about the state of public affairs? How do we joyfully share God's love with all in this kind of environment? Maybe it starts with me.

'…the path to manifesting the beloved community out in the world had to begin with building a beloved community in our own home.' (the Amen Effect, p.23)

On February 5 and 19, we will continue looking into how we can joyfully share God's love with all. One of the epiphanies for me in my prep for our sessions has been that there is a common thread - me; my attitude and my ability to take time to 'see and hear' another individual, my willingness to intentionally attend to others. How do I do that? What impact might it have? To address those questions, we will be taking a dive into the ideas of Rabbi Sharon Brous as she presented them in her book, ***The Amen Effect; Ancient Wisdom to Mend Our Broken Hearts and World.*** It is not necessary for you to have read or to purchase the book, but I encourage you at some point to read it. A key idea she shares is to put aside our own agendas, our own biases and sometimes just show up and be there for another. I hope you will join us for this timely discussion. We meet at **7pm on February 5 and 19.** Come as a first time participant or bring a friend. As always, everyone is welcome.

Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

Deborah Circle will meet in-person at 7pm on Wednesday, February 12 in the church upstairs lounge. Denise will provide Zoom. That link will be emailed close to the meeting date.

The study lesson will be from the January/February 2025 issue of Gather magazine: Session One: Faithfulness: Faith where you are: Ruth and Naomi, p. 16-21. At this writing, a study leader is needed.

Contact Melanie at 269/449-8399 to volunteer or with any questions.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for at least 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

THE BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN™ HEART-TO-HEART™

For I was hungry and you gave me food.
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
-Matthew 25:35

On December 26, Saron members Dave & Kathie Bradley, Cindy Brown, and Mary Zylema & her family (Jen Zylema and Kaju Janusz) gathered at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen to prepare and serve a meal for 67 guests. The meal consisted of ham, potato salad, coleslaw, fruit, bread and cookies. The cookies were provided by Saron members. The guests also enjoyed warm winter hats knit by Jan Taylor!

If you are able to help with the prep and serving or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering
(or those not-so-noisy bills)
on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to
ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your continued support!

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

The first step in getting involved, is getting informed. Register to receive their communications at https://swmichinterfaith.org/contact1

EYE GLASS COLLECTION

Do you have old glasses sitting in a drawer? Lions Club has provided a collection box in the narthex. We have several members who are Lions that can deliver our glasses to the club where they will do more good. Thank you!

GOOD GIFTS

Through the ELCA Good Gifts program, Saron sponsored 11 goats, 8 piglets, 26 honeybee colonies and 9 broods of chicks. There was another $300 in undesignated donations. These gifts will be sent to places that need them the most. Thank you for supporting this important outreach effort! Together, we are making a difference not just in our community, but in the world.

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Lindsay Gaspari: 847/373-8826 or lindsay.gaspari@yahoo.com

Support

The Support Committee typically meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with a brokerage firm to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Ed Brunner at ebrunner54@gmail.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

Saron Lutheran Church

1875 | 150th Anniversary | 2025

Generations of Serving & Sharing God's Love

Make new memories while we commemorate our past! Plan to attend as many events as possible and please let the lead of each subcommittee know if you'd like to help with the planning and implementation. We will update this list as it evolves.

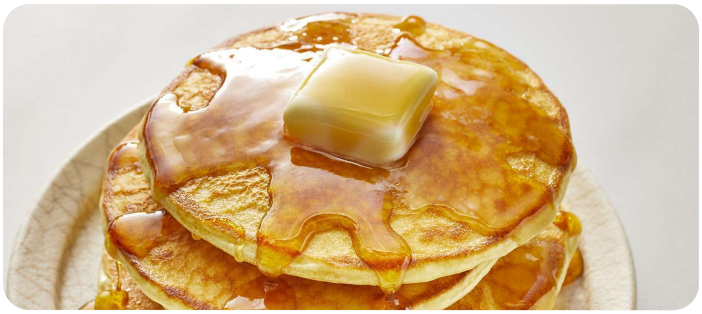
February 9: Super Chili Bowl Cook-Off

Lead: Ed Staude

(See back page for more info)

March ?: Trivia Event

Lead: Scott Gaspari



April 20: Easter Pancake Breakfast

Lead: Fran Bolson

May 10: Blossomtime Parade

Hot Dog Lunch Lead: Judi Huff

Blossomtime Parade Entry Lead: Marcus Roll

SOUTH BEND CUBS

June 20: South Bend Cubs Game

Lead: Kristen Harper

For $21, you get admission, a hot dog, chips, a drink and a baseball hat. Children 2 and under are free. Anyone is welcome to join, including extended family and friends. Please sign-up soon using the link in the weekly email. **Payment is due by February 23** as we have to pay to secure the tickets. There is a display in the narthex for cash/checks made payable to Saron with Cubs as the memo. There will be fireworks!

July 13: Group Photo

Lead: Scott Gaspari

August 10: Anniversary Celebration

Worship Service Lead: Marcus Roll

Meal Deco & Program Lead: Kristen Harper

We will have a celebratory worship with Bishop Craig Satterlee at 10am, followed by a dinner at Union + Social, a beautiful venue in St. Joseph.

Commemorative Project

Lead: Marilyn Lucy

New Church Photo Directory

Lead: Kathie Bradley

We've all wanted one and with a new pastor, it will be more important than ever to have an updated photo directory. We have professional photographers coming **March 17 & 18 at 2pm - 8:30pm.** We start sign-ups in early February. There will be a make-up day in May but we are trying to get as many done in March as possible.

Every family photographed will receive a free 8x10. There is NO obligation to buy anything. Directories will also be free once they are ready.

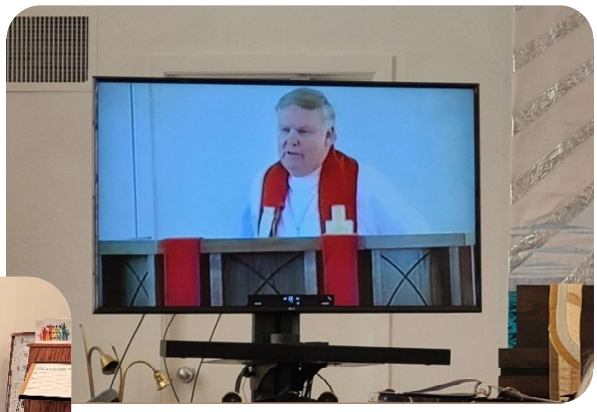
History Research, Documenting & Presenting

Lead: Kate Ulrey

Watch for emails asking for your stories! There will also be new posters with historical information appearing in the narthex throughout the year and trivia during announcements every other week. We will put as much of Saron's history as we can fit in the new directory.

Kickoff Celebration!

On January 12, we had a great time starting our 150th anniversary year by getting some Saron trivia, listening to Bishop Hansen's sermon from the 125th Anniversary, and ringing the bell 150(ish) times. After worship, we enjoyed coffee, hot chocolate, and lots of Swedish themed cookies, breads and jam. Saron's antique silver was polished to perfection! Thank you to the Kickoff Subcommittee, led by Merrily Smith, for making this event happen! It's going to be an incredible year!



SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

FEBRUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

Join us

Sunday, February 9, beginning at noon

for fellowship and chili - a winning combination!

We are making this event a cook-off this year and need some volunteers to bring their best for us to vote on! Sign up using the link in the weekly email or contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016.

You can bring cash or a check to buy tokens to use to vote. All donations collected will be used to support the 150th Anniversary. We have many events planned and a commemorative project benefiting Saron and the community.

FEBRUARY 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**3** Noon Prayer Group	**4** 6pm Bible Study	**5** 9am Helping Hands 7pm Forum & Fellowship	**6** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**7**	**8**
9 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option **Congregational Meeting & Super Chili Bowl**	**10** Noon Prayer Group	**11** 6pm Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**12** 9am Helping Hands 7pm Deborah Circle	**13** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**14**	**15**
16 8:30am Worship NO Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**17** Noon Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**18** 6pm Bible Study	**19** 9am Helping Hands 7pm Forum & Fellowship	**20** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**21**	**22** **9am – Noon Council Retreat**
23 8:30am Worship NO Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**24** Noon Prayer Group	**25** 6pm Bible Study	**26** 9am Helping Hands	**27** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **SOUP KITCHEN**	**28**	